

Chef

by

Jon Favreau

INT. KITCHEN

A seasoned leather pouch unrolls revealing gleaming Japanese chefs knives.

Large hands slide an onion onto a cutting board. Forearms with impressive tattoos. Photo-real vegetables and cooking accoutrements. A razor sharp chefs knife deftly reduces the onion to confetti.

CARL CASPER is a large man in his forties. He wears a short sleeve chef's coat. He is in a commercial kitchen alone. Morning rays of sunlight burn through the cloudy glass and kick off the sharp stainless corners surrounding him. And in the peace of the morning light, Carl does the meditative dance of preparing his mis en place.

Ingredient after ingredient is prepared and organized around his station. Jump cuts follow the rhythm of the nostalgic Afro-Cuban soundtrack as his knives dance through the produce.

The MUSIC is now "scourse" and it rises sharply in volume.

MARTIN

(o.c.)

Turn it up, Jefe! Today's the big day.

In dances MARTIN, the portly black, Cuban grill chef. He dances in to the salsa beat with an entire pig hoisted onto one shoulder.

CARL

Break it down.

MARTIN

I'll break it down...

Martin dances the salsa in place balancing the pig.

CARL

This isn't just a Yelp review. This one could make or break me.

MARTIN

That's what you always say and then you always get love.

CARL

I have no idea who they're sending.

Martin has begun breaking down the pig while they talk.

MARTIN

You shouldn't even be thinking about that, bro. Just cook.

CARL

I gotta hit the Farmer's Market. What time is it?

MARTIN

Ten?

CARL

I'm going to go pick up Percy. Where's Tony?

MARTIN

We were out late. He knows it's the big day. He'll be here.

CARL

I'll be back. Brine the head. We'll do a terrine tomorrow.

EXT. GAULOISE - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl, still sporting chef's coat and clogs, hustles to his eighties Mercedes. He spots a MAN sleeping reclined behind the wheel of a filthy Beemer. He knocks the glass. The man is startled. It's TONY, the latino Sous Chef. He is very hung over.

CARL

Up! Vamonos, Cabron!

TONY

Sorry! Am I late?

CARL

Get in there. We're getting reviewed today.

TONY

Why do you think I slept here?

CARL

I'm going to the market. Start the soup. Are you still shitfaced?

TONY

I'm good, Chef.

Carl hustles to the car.

EXT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl's seasoned Mercedes pulls up to a fat house. He hustles to the door that opens before he arrives. PERCY comes out. He's nine. Just in this brief glimpse we see a NANNY, a GARDENER, a HOUSEKEEPER and a HANDYMAN.

PERCY
Hi dad.

CARL
How's mom?

PERCY
Good.

INT. CARL'S CAR - DAY

He drives aggressively.

CARL
School?

PERCY
Good.

CARL
Good?

PERCY
Fine.

CARL
Is it good or fine?

PERCY
What's the difference?

CARL
I don't know.

PERCY
You getting reviewed today?

CARL
Yes.

PERCY
Mom said you might be weird.

CARL

I'm not weird. I don't care what they write. As long as I like what I cook.

PERCY

That's what she said you'd say.

CARL

Listen. I haven't been married to your mom for five years. She doesn't know me any more.

PERCY

I thought you said you were still friends and always will be.

CARL

We are. But that doesn't mean we know each other.

PERCY

She's usually pretty spot on about you.

CARL

Really? You know what she thinks I should do? Open a food truck.

PERCY

I like food trucks.

CARL

So do I. Who doesn't like food trucks? That doesn't mean I should drive one around like a Fisher Price figure.

PERCY

What's that?

CARL

The toy. You had them. The little wooden guys. Like Weebles.

PERCY

What's a Weeble?

CARL

You never had Weebles?

PERCY

I never had any of the stuff you're talking about.

CARL
Like a Minecraft guy.

PERCY
There are no vehicles in Minecraft.

CARL
Here we are.

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - SANTA MONICA - DAY

Carl and Percy weave through the aisles of the Farmers Market. Carl paws at the produce. He talks to a VENDOR.

CARL
So basically all you carry now is kale. Is that what you're telling me?

VENDOR
Everyone wants kale.

PERCY
(interrupts)
Can I get kettle corn?

CARL
It's not even eleven.

PERCY
So?

CARL
I'm here for work. You want a piece of fruit? Let's get you a piece of fruit.

PERCY
I don't want fruit.

CARL
You said you wanted me to help you lose weight. Listen...
(stops)
I'm not putting any pressure on you. It's something that I've struggled with and my parents struggled with and I think it's really great that you're listening to your body at your age.

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

But remember. It's up to you. I'm not putting any pressure on you.

SMASH TO:

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Percy and Carl are pounding fistfuls of steaming kettle corn.

CARL

... and I have no idea which reviewer they're sending. Most of them like me but there are some that have it in for me because I got featured in the other magazine.

PERCY

They're haters.

CARL

Exactly. We didn't have that word when I was your age. There was no word for hater. You would say someone was jealous, but it doesn't really capture it. Oh, look, the sausage guy is here. You ever try andouille sausage?

PERCY

No.

CARL

It's spicy. You like spicy?

PERCY

No.

CARL

It's not too spicy.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

The father and son are eating sausage.

CARL

It's good, right? This is Cajun food. You know what Cajun means?

PERCY

Spicy?

CARL

It's from New Orleans. Have you ever heard of New Orleans?

PERCY

Yes. It became part of the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon.

CARL

Wow. Yes. I mean do you know about it now. That was a long time ago.

PERCY

1803.

CARL

If you say so. I mean the culture. The food.

PERCY

(lifts sausage)
We can get it here.

CARL

That's just a reminder. It tastes good because it reminds you of a whole world. Of memories.

PERCY

Sounds cool.

CARL

Yes. If there's one thing New Orleans is, it's cool. We should go there together.

PERCY

You're not too busy?

CARL

I mean, not now...

PERCY

When?

CARL

I got a lot going on right now, with this critic coming in--

PERCY

After the review.

CARL
After? Sure.

PERCY
I've got a three day weekend next month.

CARL
Next month? Sure.

PERCY
Awesome.

CARL
I'll have to ask mom.

PERCY
(holds up text)
I already did. She's cool with it.

CARL
Great.

PERCY
Can I get a funnel cake?

CARL
Why would you want a funnel cake?
It's just fried dough.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Carl and Percy are both stuffing their faces with funnel cakes.

CARL
I mean, if they like it then I got real job security. People come to restaurants for the chef.

PERCY
I thought you said they come for the food.

CARL
Same thing.

PERCY

No. If you make a killer menu and teach the cooks how to make the stuff, can't they make it without you?

CARL

It's not the same.

PERCY

Sure it is. Like on the days you're not working. They still make the food, right?

CARL

Yeah. But then they're stuck with the same menu.

PERCY

But when they like it, they don't want to change the menu. Isn't that why they fired you from the last place?

CARL

They didn't fire me. I quit because they didn't share my vision.

PERCY

Which was to change the menu. Right?

CUT TO:

EXT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl's car pulls away, leaving Percy out in front of his house. Percy has an ice cream cone.

PERCY

(waving, happy)
Bye dad!

INT. GAULOISE - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl bursts in as the WAIT STAFF prepares the dining room for service. Carl inspects as he briskly passes through.

CARL

This is the big one. Let me know when he gets here. Get everyone around him drunk and happy.

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)
 Paper the tables around him with
 any sexy friends you got who like
 to laugh. Tickets are on me.

A cheer of approval rises from the young servers. He scurries into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Salsa music is blasting. The kitchen staff is choreographed in coordinated harmony as steam billows from pots and stations are arranged. Carl sets down several bags of farmers market purchases.

CARL
 What's happening here? Fill me in.

TONY
 Stock's working.

MARTIN
 Pig's broken down.

TONY
 Ribs are braising. Anything good
 from the market?

MOLLY, a very attractive floor manager in her 30s, pops into the kitchen.

CARL
 Not now, Molly. I'm about to lay
 out the menu.

MOLLY
 I've got--

CARL
 I really can't do this now. This is
 a big day.

MOLLY
 Riva's here.

Everything stops.

CARL
 What the hell is Riva doing here?

MOLLY
 He was heading back here. I flirted
 and got him an espresso.

(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I bought you maybe five minutes if you want to meet him out there on the floor.

CARL

I can't talk to him right now.

MOLLY

Fine. Expect him to come back here.

As she leaves.

CARL

Tell him to stay the fuck out of my kitchen.

MARTIN

You know he's coming back here.

CARL

How the fuck can he do this today?

TONY

It's his restaurant.

CARL

But it's my fucking kitchen! He made me a promise when he hired me.

In walks RIVA, a cool customer in his sixties, sipping an espresso. He wears the clothes of a wealthy man. He is not shaken in the least by the tirade he just caught the tail end of.

RIVA

And you promised me a Michelin star. So we're both disappointed.

CARL

Not today. Please.

RIVA

A lot is on the line today.

CARL

Exactly! I need to come up with a menu.

RIVA

That's why I'm here. I'm here to help you.

CARL

This is my thing, Riva.

RIVA
You've been off your game.

CARL
I need some room. Tonight's menu
has to be perfect.

RIVA
And I can help you plan it.

CARL
That's not how it works.

RIVA
I've done this before. I can help
guide you.

CARL
I don't need guidance. I need
space.

RIVA
(to staff)
Can we have a little privacy.

The staff leaves the kitchen. Carl erupts.

CARL
What the fuck is that!?! You don't
tell my staff what to do! This is
my kitchen! You see this line?
Everything on that side of the line
is yours and everything on this
side of the line is mine. That was
our agreement. That is how it's
going to be.

RIVA
Listen to me. I have ideas. My
ideas work. I don't care what
awards you won or what magazine
says you're the next big thing. The
fact is you work for me. In my
restaurant. I've had chefs before
you in this kitchen and I will have
chefs after you. We are being
reviewed by perhaps the most
influential food magazine in the
country. Not to mention this guy's
online presence. His blog just got
bought by AOL. This restaurant is
my life and I own it. It is mine.

(MORE)

RIVA (CONT'D)

All of the freedom you have to chase your culinary muse and the money you have to support your child and pay alimony comes because I know what I am doing and I can afford to pay you well above market value.

Carl just listens. He has been subdued and humbled. Riva produces a handwritten note.

RIVA (CONT'D)

This is the menu for tonight. I welcome your thoughts.

Carl takes the menu and reads it. Riva exits, leaving an empty demitasse on the stainless counter top. The staff cautiously filter back in. They wait. Finally...

CARL

(reads)

We're doing the egg caviar. The Hawaiian abalone again. The beef cheek with tamarind...

All energy leaves the room. All of the electricity is gone.

EXT. THIRD STREET PROMENADE - DAY

CLOSE UP on a little marionette of a skeleton dancing and singing along with a recording of Al Green's Tired of Being Alone. Carl stares at it. He is standing next to his son who is eating Wetzels Pretzel bits. He tries to attract his father's attention.

PERCY

Dad? Dad..?

INT. CLOSED BAR - VENICE - NIGHT

Carl and his staff slam shots after work. Everyone is smoking and the bar is closed to all but other restaurant staffs. The mood is very festive. Like they're celebrating. Carl reads from an iPhone:

CARL

(reading)

"... What was reputed to be a reinterpretation of French gastrophilia rapidly degraded to a hackneyed rehash of derivative cliches.

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

Gauloises has proven to be the birthing suite of yet another stillborn "Chef to Watch." If Chef de Cuisine Carl Casper has something to say, he should say it somewhere else. Gauloises is still the best restaurant in Brentwood. But there is little pride in being declared the skinniest kid in fat camp. Three stars."

TONY

Three stars!?!

MARTIN

What the fuck!?!

CARL

He pulverizes my asshole then he gives the restaurant three stars.

MARTIN

He's fucking with you, dude.

CARL

That motherfucker.

MARTIN

He's fucking with you.

TONY

Did you fuck his wife?

CARL

I fucking should.

MARTIN

He'll fuckin do it.

TONY

Fuck him.

MARTIN

Three stars.

CARL

Riva paid him off or some shit.

MOLLY

He liked the food.

CARL

Wait, what?

MOLLY

I watched him the whole time. He liked everything. I told you that that night.

CARL

You always say they like the food.

MOLLY

I don't lie to you, Carl.

CARL

How do you know?

MOLLY

I would ask him. He said everything was perfectly cooked and delicious.

Beat.

MARTIN

Some shit's fucked up.

TONY

Something's going on here.

EXT. ELECTRIC AVENUE - VENICE - NIGHT

Carl and Molly smoke a joint on the hood of a parked car behind the bar.

CARL

I don't get it. I don't fucking get it.

MOLLY

He's an asshole.

CARL

I try so fucking hard.

MOLLY

You're the best chef I've ever worked with.

He turns. Touched and vulnerable.

CARL

Really?

MOLLY

Really. Just watching you work. It makes me excited to come in every day. To do it right. To not let you down.

After a pause of emotional warmth Carl goes to kiss her. She politely retreats.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I can't

CARL

(sweetly)
Why?

MOLLY

I just can't.

CARL

You liked it last time.

MOLLY

That's not the point. We work together.

CARL

We did it before and it didn't change anything.

MOLLY

Exactly. It didn't change anything.

He starts kissing her again. She gives in.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck it.

SMASH TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - NIGHT

SILHOUETTE of four thrusts of them unceremoniously pounding the shit out of one another.

SMASH TO:

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Molly smokes naked in bed. Alone.

MOLLY

We shouldn't have done that.

Carl call back from the kitchen. He is meticulously preparing a charcuterie board and tiny runny grilled cheddar sandwiches on farmers sourdough.

CARL

Why?

MOLLY

It's no good. You're married.

CARL

I've been divorced for five years.

MOLLY

Point is, you're not emotionally available.

He brings in the late night snack.

CARL

Taste this and you tell me who's not emotionally available.

She bites into it. Ecstasy.

MOLLY

Oh my Gawd... This is amazing.

CARL

I told you I'd give you an orgasm by the end of the night.

EXT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl waits in his old Mercedes out front of his ex-wife's mini mansion. He listens to vintage Latin music. Percy runs up to his window.

CARL

Let's go. We're going to be late.

PERCY

Mom wants to talk to you.

CUT TO:

INT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl walks past an endless parade of domestic employees. A handyman is painting. A cleaning lady is cleaning. A cook is cooking. Percy leads him to an office in the back where a gardener gardens and a CAR WASHER washes the car. Carl's beautiful Cuban ex-wife, INEZ, sits wearing a bluetooth headset. She smiles and holds up a finger as she trills on in Spanish.

INEZ

(into phone/Spanish)

It's being delivered in the morning. It may even get there tonight...

(then to Carl)

Hi, Papi.

(then into phone/Spanish)

Yes. It will all be there. I have to go. Bye.

The headset comes off.

INEZ (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

CARL

About what? The review? What the hell does it mean anyway? I cooked what they wanted me to cook. And I got three stars. I mean, three stars is good. I don't know why he was saying all that negative--

INEZ

Are you happy there?

CARL

Sure. I mean, we're packed every night. I get to cook whatever I want. I mean usually... He pays me well.

INEZ

Since when does that matter?

CARL

Since you keep a staff of fifty people to keep the compound up to snuff.

INEZ

Don't start.

CARL
You have literally fifty people
working here. Percy's nine. Does he
really need a nanny?

INEZ
You want to talk about it? Let's
talk about it.

CARL
Just to be clear, you believe a
nanny is a lifetime position. Even
when you don't have kids anymore.

INEZ
This isn't why I invited you in.

CARL
He's in school all day. What does
she even do here?
(then)
Hi Guadalupe.

INEZ
Could we not talk about this now? I
just wanted to make sure you're
okay.

CARL
Thank you. I am.

Nice moment. Then.

CARL (CONT'D)
You need money?

INEZ
I'm good.

PERCY
We're going to be late.

SMASH TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Carl and Percy sit side by side eating popcorn and watching a
loud action movie. Abrupt CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

Carl and Percy sit side by side on a racing rollercoaster. Abrupt CUT TO:

EXT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - NIGHT

Carl pulls away leaving Percy in front of his house waving.

PERCY

Bye, dad.

INT. KITCHEN - GAULOISES - NIGHT

Tight, impressionistic SHOTS of Carl preparing a dish. He is alone and experimenting. Each ingredient, and cooking surface, and knife stroke and gas flame fills the SCREEN unexpectedly, each gesture imbued with a wisp of life. Cooking is a transcendent dance for Carl, and time bends as he enters the flow. A dish emerges as if sculpted with time and temperature. And many other beautiful creations now surround him.

Martin enters. It is clear that it is now...

INT. KITCHEN - GAULOISES - MORNING

MARTIN

You been here all night?

CARL

I need a new menu.

MARTIN

You got to get some sleep, dude.
Fuck Twitter.

CARL

What do you mean fuck Twitter?

MARTIN

I mean fuck em. Who even reads that
shit anyway.

CARL

I'm not on Twitter. I don't know
what you're talking about.

MARTIN

Nothing. It's just some bullshit.

CARL
Taste this.

Carl feeds him a spoon like a baby.

MARTIN
Woooo hoo! You gotta serve that
shit tonight.

CARL
I'm going to make it the special.

Tony walks in, arriving at work.

TONY
You were cooking all night, you
sick fuck?

MARTIN
Taste this shit.

Martin feeds Tony like a baby.

TONY
Fuck, that's good.

CARL
Tonight's special.

TONY
Yo, fuck Twitter.

CARL
Again with the Twitter. Show me
this Twitter thing.

TONY
You're not on Twitter?

CARL
No.

TONY
Are you getting too much pussy? Is
that the problem?

CARL
What's Twitter got to do with
pussy?

TONY
Have you ever heard the term social
networking?

CARL

Yes.

TONY

That's what it means.

CARL

It means pussy?

MARTIN

Yeah.

TONY

Or ticket sales, or getting people to show up to see a band. Anything that requires a data base.

CARL

And you're saying pussy requires a data base.

MARTIN

Uh... Yeah.

TONY

Not for "The Most Promising Chef" of Food and Wine magazine.

CARL

So show me your Twitter. What's it say that's so bad?

MARTIN

(covering)

Nothing, Jefe. I want to hear your new menu.

CARL

I'm thinking we switch things up more. Why limit ourselves to the French classics? Let's bring in other flavor profiles.

TONY

But it's a French restaurant.

CARL

Riva has us cooking the same exact menu for the last five years.

TONY

It's a good menu.

CARL

I know. I came up with it five years ago. We have to switch it up.

TONY

We do switch it up. Every few months.

CARL

Please. We swap out one dish for a dish we already served. I feel like a robot.

TONY

You should check with Riva first.

CARL

You're my sous chef. Don't worry about Riva. Worry about me.

TONY

I worry about you all the time. That's why I'm telling you.

CARL

Thank you for your concern. Now. Here's tonight's menu and how I want it prepared...

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - DAY

Carl and Percy stare at a TV and eat hero sandwiches from Bay City Deli.

CARL

How does Twitter work?

PERCY

It's cool.

CARL

That's how it works? It's cool?

PERCY

You tweet on it.

CARL

Is it like texting?

PERCY

No.

CARL
Can you sign me up?

CUT TO:

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - MOMENTS LATER

Percy is punching numbers into Carl's iPhone at the breakfast table.

CARL
Is it for sex?

PERCY
Ew! No! Is that what you're doing
this for?

CARL
No!

PERCY
What do you want your user name to
be?

CARL
Carl.

PERCY
You can't just put "Carl." It has
to be "at" something.

CARL
At Carl.

PERCY
It's gonna be taken.

CARL
At Carl Casper.

PERCY
(types)
Taken.

CARL
Someone took my name?

PERCY
There. Carl Casper with K's.

CARL
Carl Casper with K's.

PERCY

What do you want this for?

CARL

Someone said there's something bad on there.

PERCY

Wait. Here. Hang on. Oh, shit.

CARL

Don't say that.

PERCY

That review is viral.

CARL

What's viral?

PERCY

It got picked up and retweeted everywhere.

CARL

Is that bad?

PERCY

Not really. It just means a really lot of people are reading it reposting it so all of their followers can read it.

CARL

Oh shit.

PERCY

I think it's cool.

CARL

I don't.

PERCY

No, I mean us doing this.

CARL

Doing what?

PERCY

You know, hanging out.

CARL

We always hang out.

PERCY

I mean, like, hanging out and doing something.

CARL

We do lots of things.

PERCY

No, like learning things from each other. And talking. Not just watching something or doing something.

Wow...

CARL

I guess I just figured with you living with mom and me working so much you would want to have fun when we're together.

PERCY

Well, I think this is fun. Just, like, figuring stuff out. Like when you lived at home.

CARL

I miss it too.

PERCY

Then why don't you move back home.

CARL

Percy, listen, you're not the reason your mom and I are separated.

PERCY

I know.

CARL

Good. Cause it's true.

PERCY

Then why?

CARL

It's hard to explain. We grew apart.

PERCY

Oh.

CARL
Understand?

PERCY
No.

CARL
It's hard to explain.
(then)
Can we twitter each other? Like
when we're not together.

PERCY
(smiles)
Yeah.

CARL
Will you show me how?

The father and son hunker down. Quality time as we trail off
in a WIDE SHOT.

PERCY
Ok. First, you gotta enter my user
name here. You can also log in on
your iPad. If you click this button
it posts it on your feed, where
everyone who follows you can read
it and since I follow you, you can
direct message me...

CARL
(impressed)
How did you get so smart?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - NIGHT

Percy is sleeping in a foldaway bed in Carl's modest
apartment. The lights are all off but for a bright fixture
pointed down at the table where Carl sits peering and poking
at his iPad mini.

We see the iPad in both INSERTS and as CHYRONS on the SCREEN
showing the TWITTER FEED.

He does a search for his own name and, sure enough, a
headline pops up:

"Carl Casper - Stillborn Chef"

He clicks the link and it's the scathing review. He scrolls through the search results and there are endless RETWEETS of the repeated article.

He clicks the link of who originally posted the review. It's @RamseyMichel

A profile page shows other review headlines and a link to...

A HOMEPAGE, sponsored by AOL. Ramsey Michel is clearly a passionate food critic and blogger who not only writes, but provides a digital nexus for discerning food culture. His page boasts a meticulous design and a photographic portrait of Ramsey Michel (ten years younger) sitting at a white linen tablecloth about to eat a plate of Zeros and Ones. The blog is called "The Digital Palate" and he also seems to review for a larger established food magazine in which the bad review had also appeared.

Carl can't help but reread the lashing of words, now with a press photo of himself repurposed for the blog.

He clicks the link of his photo and it takes him to the original article in FOOD & WINE MAGAZINE from almost a decade ago that touted Carl Casper: MOST PROMISING CHEFS. Carl Casper stands in a chefs coat with arms crossed sporting his culinary forearm tattoos. "THE MAVERICK WITH MUSCLE" is engraved below the artistic portrait in tattoo lettering. The deco architecture of SOUTH BEACH, MIAMI looms behind him.

JUMP TO Carl eating cold leftovers as he reads Ramsey Michel's blog again and clicks links to other pages.

JUMP TO Carl eating a bowl of cereal as he looks at Ramsey Michel's twitter profile and CLICKS THE BUTTON to REPLY to @RamseyMichel...

TWITTER

@RamseyMichel Is Gauloises a three star restaurant or a "hackneyed rehash?" You can't even write a consistent review.

Carl hits send and crashes to bed. Hitchcock shot pushing in on his phone... The twitter feed starts to fill rapidly...

INT. KITCHEN - CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - MORNING

Magical CLOSE CUTS of: eggs being broken. Whisked. Crackling in a seasoned iron skillet. Bacon curling. Biscuits rolled and floured. Steaming as they're pulled from an outdated oven in a humble kitchen.

Espresso made in an old aluminum stovetop Primula. Home fries perfectly browned. Oranges hand juiced.

As Carl toils in the kitchen, his sleepy nine year old son zombie walks to the breakfast table and waits for breakfast and clearheadedness.

He checks out dad's phone and is puzzled.

PERCY

Dad. You got over three thousand followers since last night.

CARL

Is that good?

PERCY

It's amazing.

CARL

What does that mean?

PERCY

It means three thousand people are reading your twitter feed.

CARL

I thought it was like texting.

Percy, curious, checks his feed and @ mentions. He is concerned.

PERCY

Did you post anything?

CARL

No.

PERCY

Are you sure?

CARL

Yes. I just sent a private message.

PERCY

To who?

CARL

That a-hole food critic.

PERCY

You could only send a private message to someone who is following you. I think you posted it publicly.

CARL

No. He wrote a nasty message about me and I hit "reply" and it let me send him a message.

PERCY

Dad. Replies are public. Everyone can read them. And it looks like he retweeted it to all of his... three million followers. And he wrote back.

CARL

(uh oh)
What's it say?

PERCY

"@KarlKasper If you worried more about your cooking and less about my writing you might not be such a disappointment."

CARL

What? He wrote that to me?

PERCY

He wrote that to everybody.

SMASH TO:

INT. KITCHEN - GAULOISES - MORNING

Carl reads his iPhone. He has now fully discovered the dark side of the social networking. Tony and Martin are gathered in looking at their phones too.

TONY

You gotta be fisting me.

CARL

Do you realize how many people have read this? Look. I'm up to ten thousand followers. And they're sending me messages. They're goading me into responding.

MARTIN
Leave it alone, dude.

CARL
But half the people are saying he's
right.

TONY
And half the people are saying he's
wrong. Welcome to the fucking
internet.

Carl starts typing.

MARTIN
Don't do it, Jefe.

TONY
(types)
Fuck him.
(reads)
"Why don't you come by again
tonight. I got a whole new menu
just for you asshole."

TONY (CONT'D)
Don't do it...

Carl clicks SEND. There is a stillness in the air. Such a quiet little gesture is now being read by thousands of people.

TONY (CONT'D)
That's out there now. There's no
way to take that back.

CARL
Good. I don't want to take that
back. I threw down the gauntlet, so
let's get ready for a fight. I'm
gonna drop off Percy and when I
come back I'll have a whole new
menu written for tonight. You know
what? I'm fucking happy this
happened. We're going to really
cook again!

Carl hustles out leaving Martin and Tony quietly behind. A foreboding moment hangs in Carl's wake.

Carl scoops up Percy who sits with Molly in the empty dining area.

MOLLY

Oh look. Daddy's done.

CARL

Let's go, champ.

(to Molly)

Prep the staff. Whole new menu tonight. Keep it quiet from Riva. I don't need the aggravation tonight.

MOLLY

You should really take a minute to--

CARL

I'll prepare every dish for everyone to taste before we open.

INT. CARL'S CAR - MORNING

Carl drives Percy home.

PERCY

So where we going today.

CARL

I'm sorry, buddy. I've got to drop you off at home.

Percy is disappointed.

PERCY

Why do I always have to stay out of the kitchen?

CARL

I just needed to talk to the guys for a minute.

PERCY

I mean when you're working.

CARL

It's loud and hot and there's a lot of bad language.

PERCY

I hear bad language all the time.

CARL

Where?

PERCY

Online.

CARL

What kind of sites can a nine year old get on that has cursing?

PERCY

YouTube.

CARL

Besides, I thought you like to talk to pretty Molly.

PERCY

I'd rather hang out in the kitchen.

CARL

When you're older.

PERCY

Can I come shopping with you?

CARL

No. I have a lot to do and a lot on my mind.

PERCY

Why was that man so mean to you?

CARL

The food critic?

PERCY

Yeah.

CARL

It's his job.

PERCY

To write bad things about people?

CARL

To write bad things. To write good things.

PERCY

But they write bad about you.

CARL

They wrote good things about me too. Back when I worked in Miami they wrote really nice things about me.

PERCY

That's where you met mommy.

CARL

And where you were born. And where
your Abuelito lives.

PERCY

Are you going to marry Molly.

CARL

(shocked)

What? What did she say to you?

PERCY

About what?

CARL

About getting married?

PERCY

Nothing.

CARL

Oh, God. Don't scare me like that.

PERCY

Are you?

CARL

No. No I'm not. Not that she's not
a great person. I'm just not... The
answer is I'm not getting married
to anyone. Not for a long time.

PERCY

Oh.

CARL

Why? Don't you like her?

PERCY

She's cool.

CARL

You just don't want me getting
married.

PERCY

Right.

CARL

Because she's not mom.

PERCY

Right.

CARL

I totally get it. I do. But one of these days I might get into a relationship and as much as I love mom and as good of friends as we are, you may have to open yourself up to the idea of me with someone other than mom.

PERCY

It's hard.

CARL

I know. I know it is. That's why I'm bringing it up now.

PERCY

I can only picture you with mom.

CARL

That's totally understandable. And, to be clear, I don't foresee any of this happening soon.

PERCY

Good.

CARL

But I'm asking you to keep an open mind.

PERCY

I'll try.

EXT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl pulls up and Inez is waiting by the curb.

INEZ

Papi, are you okay?

CARL

Yeah. I'm fine.

INEZ

You want to talk. My publicist says she would talk to you if you want.

CARL

About what? I twittered one thing.

INEZ
Papi, it's going viral. He's been
blogging all day about you
challenging him.

CARL
What?

INEZ
Just talk to Jen. Come inside. We
could call her.

CARL
I really have to go. I have to go
to the market and prep an entire
new menu for tonight.

INEZ
Please.

INT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl and Inez sit in her home office as she leaves a message.

INEZ
(leaves voicemail)
Hi Jen. Give me a call at home. I
got Carl here. He needs to hear
what you were telling me about
digital publicity. Ciao.

CARL
I'm going to go.

INEZ
(pointing to text)
She'll call right back she's on the
other line.

CARL
I think you're making more of this
than it is.

INEZ
I know why you're upset. You should
be. I think the problem is not the
twitter. It's where you are
working.

CARL
I don't want to hear about the food
truck idea again.

INEZ

Why? I can get you one for nothing. You can be your own boss. Cook your food.

CARL

I'm not becoming a hot dog vendor.

INEZ

That's your ego talking. Getting written up was the worst thing that happened to you.

CARL

It's one bad review.

INEZ

No. I mean the good reviews. Eight years ago.

CARL

What?

INEZ

You used to take chances. You were happy. Now you play it safe. You're miserable.

CARL

I gotta go.

INEZ

You know the food truck is a good idea. I could book you for all the parties I'm doing.

CARL

I'm not a caterer, okay? And I don't need any charity from you or your ex-husband.

INEZ

He offered. And he was your friend too.

CARL

I don't want any kind of trendy bullshit food truck. Especially from him. I have a job in one of the top restaurants on the West Side. We do consistent business and people like the food.

INEZ

I know you. And I know you're not happy.

CARL

I'm starting to remember why things didn't work out with us.

That biting comment ends the conversation.

We reveal that Percy was listening from outside the room unbeknownst to his parents. This is the last thing he wanted to hear.

CARL (CONT'D)

Now I've got to go and cook my food at my restaurant, despite what you might think. I have complete freedom and I like my life. As far as your publicist goes, if she calls back, tell her I had to go but she can call me on my cell, but I already understand that shit on the internet never goes away and I won't tweet any pictures of my dick. Beyond that, I would appreciate being left alone and any career advice for me should be kept to oneself.

(exit)

INT. GAULOISE - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl bursts in with arms full of groceries. There is a buzz in the kitchen.

CARL

Chingale. Gather the whole kitchen staff. I got the whole menu. All local. Farm to table. All simple to prepare.

(pulls a scribbled page)

How much beef stock is left?

TONY

Enough.

CARL

Demi glace?

Molly heads in as Carl lays out ingredients.

MOLLY

Carl. We need to talk about tonight.

CARL

How many covers are we expecting?

MOLLY

We're overbooked. But--

CARL

I can get used to this twitter thing. I want a table for one with a "reserved" sign sitting on it. In script. Like in a fucking movie, waiting for that prick Ramsey Michel so everyone can see if he never shows up.

MOLLY

I think you should go out front--

CARL

I got a whole new menu. Tell the front of the house I want them to sample every dish. I want them to really understand what's going on with the new menu, not just push out the specials. The whole menu's special. And there's no paper menu tonight. I'll write it out on a fucking board like a bistro...

Riva walks in. The Grim Reaper.

RIVA

The menu is staying the same. You may slot in one special that I have the right to approve.

CARL

Riva. I've got a whole new thing for tonight.

RIVA

That may be true, but this is the most reservations we've had for a weeknight since we opened.

CARL

That's because I got on twitter.

RIVA

That's another thing. From now on I will approve anything you post online.

CARL

That's the whole reason people are coming. I called out Ramsey Michel and they want to see me stick it up his ass.

RIVA

You attacked one of the most influential critics in the city and you will tweet an apology.

CARL

You're fucking crazy--

RIVA

I am fucking crazy. That's why either you keep the same menu our customers have come to expect--

CARL

The same food?

RIVA

The same exact menu with one daily special that I have approval over--

CARL

Our deal is the kitchen is my domain--

RIVA

The deal changed.

Fuck. Everyone is uncomfortable.

RIVA (CONT'D)

Now you can stay or you can go. It's up to you.

CARL

These people are here for my food.

RIVA

No they're here for my food.

CARL

I created these dishes.

RIVA

For my restaurant. Either you can cook them or Tony can. He does half the time anyway.

CARL

So your firing me and promoting my Sous Chef.

RIVA

I'm not firing anyone. I'm telling you what I'm prepared to do if you get all artsy on me.

CARL

(to Tony)

And this is okay with you?

RIVA

We already discussed it. He's ready to run a kitchen.

Wow. This hurts.

CARL

I see. I see.

No outburst. He removes his apron and grabs his knife bag.

CARL (CONT'D)

Good luck.

He leaves. No one takes this lightly. The air is heavy.

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - DAY/NIGHT

Carl unpacks the mountain of groceries and, through a tapestry of images set to Cuban acoustic folk guitar and vocals, we see him assemble the menu he had planned for that night at Gauloises restaurant.

CROSS CUT WITH:

INT. GAULOISE - BRENTWOOD - NIGHT

We follow Molly, dressed to the nines, as she seats guests. The bar is full. Diners are cued at the hostess stand. Tables are full. Molly looks up as the camera evolves into an OVER of a GUEST who has entered. Molly looks up and visibly tenses as she recognizes the DINER. She leads him to a two top that is set and waiting with a "reserved" sign on it.

He sits and we dramatically reveal it to be RAMSEY MICHEL from the blog photo. He politely accepts a menu.

His confusion reading the selections available is INTERCUT with Carl's solitary preparations in his home kitchen.

Ramsey Michel waves over Molly.

MOLLY

How can I help you?

RAMSEY MICHEL

Is this is the same menu as last time I was here?

MOLLY

I believe it is, yes.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I was under the impression that tonight was to be more of an "event."

MOLLY

I understand.

RAMSEY MICHEL

Is there any way that I may have a word with Chef Casper?

MOLLY

I'm afraid--

Riva interrupts, gladhanding the VIP.

RIVA

Unfortunately Chef was called away.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I see. Has he left word as to when he plans to return?

RIVA

I'm afraid that was left ambiguous. Why don't I bring you a drink and an order of the caviar egg while you wait. Have you ever tried the caviar egg? It's one of our signature dishes.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I have.

RIVA

Molly, I'd like you to see to it
that Monsieur Michel is served a
caviar egg without delay.

Molly seems queasy and conflicted as she attends to the request.

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - NIGHT

He meticulously plates each dish. He sits surrounded by the feast. A lonely party with no guests. Night has fallen.

Then the eating begins. A taste from each plate. He logs on to twitter and sees there are a staggering amount of mentions. He attempts to compose a tweet. It appears on screen as a Chyron as he types:

TWITTER

It is with great sadness that I
announce that I have left...

He then DELETES the post before ever hitting send.

He surfs. GOOGLES himself. Never a good idea. A page of search results come up. Snippets of his history.

Pics of him posing outside a MIAMI FRENCH RESTAURANT.

Features of him as a promising new chef from the Miami Herald. Time Out. New York Times. LA Times.

New head chef of Gauloises. Lots of hype. Good reviews from years ago celebrating the fresh new menu at Gauloises. A promise of great things to come.

Then he checks the twitter feed. There is a fresh post by @RamseyMichel:

TWITTER (CONT'D)

It's official. Stillborn Chef
@KarlKasper was a no show. Perhaps
the lack of heart is what I tasted
in his food.

Carl is afraid, shocked, disgusted and infuriated.

At his table in Gauloises, Ramsey Michel puts away his cell phone as he ambiguously pecks at a caviar egg.

INT. KITCHEN - GAULOISES - NIGHT - LATER

Molly is on the house phone. The kitchen is slammed. Martin sweats at the grill. Dishes stack at the washing station. Tony struggles in his new role as Chef de Cuisine. Riva storms in, totally flustered...

RIVA

Table eleven is still waiting for apps! Molly, I need you to help expedite!

MOLLY

I'll be right there. I got a res cancelling.

(into phone)

We're in deep weeds, Carl, I can't talk.

CARL

(o.c.)

What did we serve?

MOLLY

The same shit. He refused dessert.

CARL

(o.c.)

Keep him there.

MOLLY

What!?!

CARL

I said keep him there!

CAMERA SLAMS into Molly's face as she realizes...

She looks through the porthole to the front of house.

The front door flies open. Carl charges in like a Brahma bull. SLAM into Carl as he looks around. Then he sees Ramsey Michel preoccupied with postprandular texting. Riva sees and gets in Carl's face to intercept the confrontation. Afro-Cuban percussion swells the SCORE as blood rises.

RIVA

(hushed intimidation)

Back of the house! Work your way through the stacked tickets and we'll talk reinstatement. On my terms.

CARL

Fuck you.

Carl pushes past him and calls to Ramsey Michel's table. The restaurant falls silent. Ramsey looks up as we PUSH IN to his bemused expression.

CARL (CONT'D)

(holds up phone)

No heart!?! Is that what you tasted?

RAMSEY MICHEL

I wrote the truth.

CARL

You wouldn't know good food if your face was smashed into it!

Cell phone cameras start popping up like prairie dogs.

RAMSEY MICHEL

At first I was surprised that you didn't show. Then it made sense. You've got nothing left to say.

CARL

Nothing to say? How's this, asshole? You're a self-satisfied judgemental--- HATER! You make nothing. You live to tear others down who are trying.

Ramsey calmly rises, leaves a generous tip and evenly and quietly offers to Carl...

RAMSEY MICHEL

(measured)

I was talking about your cooking. You have nothing left to say with your cooking.

(then quietly)

And if you were "trying" we wouldn't even be having this conversation.

CARL

You're a fucking asshole! You know that? Go ahead! Walk out! You pompous fuck! Go!

Ramsey walks out, unfazed. Carl is left alone in a forest of staring video phones and flashing cameras. Martin, Molly, Tony, and Riva all watch as Carl is frozen with numb fog.

CUT TO:

Tight on a laptop screen featuring a TMZ.com article. It is a video clip of Carl's outburst in Gauloises the night before with the headline "HOLLYWOOD CHEF GOES POSTAL ON FOOD CRITIC." Reveal we are in...

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - VENICE - DAY

Carl is on the phone with Inez's publicist JEN, who we CROSS CUT with in her...

INT. PUBLICISTS OFFICE - LOS ANGELES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jen is dressed very smart behind her desk in a sandblasted brick loft space.

JEN

I don't think you understand how this works. This is exactly the type of thing that website lives for.

CARL

But you're a publicist. Don't you have relationships with these people. I mean, isn't that what you are hired to do?

JEN

I do have relationships, but it's out there. Even if I could persuade one site to pull down one clip there are a dozen others from other cell phones.

CARL

Can we at least lawyer up and threaten them with legal action?

JEN

Then that becomes another story. That you're threatening them. Do you get what I'm saying?

CARL

No.

JEN

Because there's so much footage
it's become a hot story. And it's
of you threatening someone.

CARL

I didn't threaten him--

JEN

You said you would smash his face
in the food--

CARL

I said he wouldn't know good food
if I smashed his face in it. That's
different--

JEN

So then you threatening them with
lawyers builds on the story that's
already getting a lot of play. And
then you get another week of
headlines. And this critic has been
posting fresh blogs about you
nonstop and they're all getting
picked up. And the picked up
headlines are getting picked up by
each other. I've never seen
anything like it.

CARL

So you're telling me there's
nothing I can do.

JEN

To get the footage down, no. That
lives forever.

CARL

Great. Awesome.

JEN

But there might be an opportunity
here.

CARL

How can this possibly be an
opportunity?

JEN

I was holding off until we spoke,
but I'm fairly certain we have a
good shot at Hell's Kitchen.

CARL
Wait, what?

JEN
The reality show.

CARL
I don't think you understand what the fuck is going on right here. I am a real chef and I need a real job. I am not a clown or a circus performer. I need to find a job and none of this is helping. I was featured as Most Promising Chef in--

JEN
Yes. Inez sent the press packet. It's very impressive. But that was then and this is now.

CARL
I need a job.

JEN
You're profile says you're up to two hundred thousand followers on Twitter.

CARL
I'm about to cancel the account.

JEN
Don't! I can get you money to mention products.

CARL
What the fuck do you think I'm about? Aren't you listening to me?

JEN
You said you needed money.

CARL
A job. I need a job. Like I had.

JEN
Look. I don't know how the whole culinary thing works, but in Hollywood when you get caught up on the wrong side of the publicity machine you got two choices: You either lean into it and work it for all it's worth...

CARL
The Honey Boo Boo approach.

JEN
For lack of a better example. By the way, do you have any idea how much money she pulls down--

CARL
Let's move on.

JEN
Or you go underground until the storm passes.

CARL
I thought this shit lives forever online.

JEN
It does. But the news cycle is fast and there's so much white noise nobody remembers anything. At least not the specifics. Just a faint glimmer of familiarity. Example: Nobody remembers exactly what OJ was in trouble for.

CARL
Yes they do.

JEN
Okay. That's not the best example. It's the exception that proves the rule.

CARL
(gives up)
Okay. Thanks for your time.

JEN
Call anytime.

CARL
Thank you. And thank Inez for me.

JEN
And as far as Hell's Kitchen?

CARL
What about it?

JEN
Do you want me to pursue it?

CARL
No I don't want you to pursue it.

JEN
Good. Fine. I was just checking.

CARL
Goodbye. My other line's ringing.

JEN
Bye.

He switches over and it's Inez. We CROSS CUT the call with her...

INT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Inez sits in her home office on the phone with Carl.

CARL
Hi.

INEZ
Hi, Papi. Did Jen call you?

CARL
Just got off with her.

INEZ
And?

CARL
It's a mess. I just want to cook.

INEZ
It will all work out.

CARL
I have a couple leads on head chef positions.

INEZ
Good.

CARL
A half dozen places tried to poach me when I was working at Gauloises. I have some appointments lined up this week.

INEZ
They would be lucky to have you.

CARL
Listen. Until this job situation is sorted out, I need you to keep Percy.

INEZ
(concerned)
You're still taking him to New Orleans, right?

CARL
Is he there?

She looks over to Percy who sits on the couch playing on an iPad. He is half listening and knows it's not good from the half of the call he can hear.

INEZ
I'll tell him.

CARL
Put him on.

She does.

PERCY
Hi dad. I understand if we can't go to New Orleans.

CARL
Really? You're the best. I'm just really busy right now.

No one can see, but Inez is holding back tears.

PERCY
Some other time.

CARL
Definitely. Some other time.

Inez looks down to Percy's iPad. He was watching father's outburst on TMZ. He knows what's happening.

INT. THE OTHER ROOM - ABBOT KINNEY - VENICE - LATE NIGHT

Camera pushes into the bar revealing Martin, Tony, Molly and other Gauloises staff drinking after closing. The drinkers each stop talking and look towards camera. Carl steps in to what we realize is a moving OVER. They all seem both embarrassed and happy to see him. Silence is broken by...

MARTIN
Jefe needs a drink!

They all gather in around him, clapping him on the shoulder.

JUMP CUTS of interactions lubricated by shots of aged RUM:

Martin and Carl are pressed into the rail

MARTIN (CONT'D)
I don't like it. It's fucked up.
The energy is fucked up.

CARL
Do the diners care?

MARTIN
To be honest, most people don't notice. Or they think you're still back there cooking. I can tell the food's different. And the regulars know.

CARL
But they still come.

MARTIN
Sure. It's still your food. You set the menu. The whole thing stinks.

CARL
That's the game, though. I knew when I signed up. I'll be good once I get my next gig.

MARTIN
I mean, in the beginning, we were breaking new ground. Trying new ideas. Now it's all safe. Repeating everything we came up with when we started.

CARL
Of course they play it safe. They're making money.

MARTIN
One of these places you're talking to will hire you and when they do, I will leave Gauloises in a heartbeat.

CARL
Thanks man.

Tony joins them at the bar.

TONY
(to bartender)
Set us up. Three more.
(to Carl)
I'm in too.

CARL
Seriously?

TONY
I'm still your Sous Chef. I
wouldn't have ever been hired there
if you didn't bring us from Miami.

CARL
They promoted you. You're a Chef de
Cuisine now.

TONY
You really think they wanted me as
their head chef? It was the only
thing they could do to cut your
throat and make the transition
seamless. I mean, I feel bad.

CARL
You shouldn't.

TONY
No. It's weird without you. It's
like, We're cooking your food. And
Riva's acting like it's his menu--

MARTIN
And he fought you on every single
idea back when you came up with
them.

TONY
That's what I'm saying--

MARTIN
They fought you on hiring us, for
Christ's sake!

CARL
Enough. That's not why I'm here. I
just missed you guys and wanted to
make sure everyone was okay.

Carl waves for another round and his smile fades and SOUND drops out as he locks eyes with the sad smiling face of Molly.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELECTRIC AVENUE - VENICE - NIGHT - LATER

Carl and Molly smoke a joint. The mood is much different from last time they did this. Molly is a bit gloomy and Carl is out of fight.

MOLLY

I guess I didn't realize I would miss you so much. I mean, as a friend. Just seeing you every day. Everyone feels your energy is missing.

CARL

They all cancelled.

MOLLY

What?

CARL

The job interviews for executive chef. All of them cancelled.

MOLLY

Shit. Because of all the online nonsense?

CARL

They don't say it, but it's gotta be.

MOLLY

Wow.

CARL

Inez's publicist says I just gotta wait it out. That people will forget.

MOLLY

Well. She's the expert.

CARL

You don't sound convinced.

MOLLY

I see it different.

CARL

How?

MOLLY

I don't think anyone forgets anything. I think people take cues from how the individual reacts. How much shame you decide to carry. Like Obama with the weed. He doesn't care so nobody else does.

CARL

That's all well and good, but the public doesn't vote for who gets to be a chef. The suits have to hire me or I can't cook.

MOLLY

Nobody can stop you from cooking.

Carl takes a last hit.

CARL

It's late. I think we should probably go our separate ways tonight.

MOLLY

That's presumptuous of you.

CARL

What?

MOLLY

You assume I want to sleep with you.

CARL

I assume you won't sleep with me. You only sleep with chefs.

MOLLY

Wow, you managed to insult both of us with one unfunny biting comment.

CARL

I'm sorry. You're right.
(kisses goodbye)
Say goodnight to everyone for me.
Tell them I had an early interview tomorrow.

MOLLY
You don't have to lie to them. They
all look up to you.

CARL
Say whatever you want.

Before he leaves...

MOLLY
How's Percy?

CARL
Fine. Busy with school.

MOLLY
Have you seen him?

CARL
Inez has taken him lately. Until I
figure things out.

MOLLY
Listen to me.
(lock eyes)
I don't think you're going to
figure anything out any time soon.
Give yourself some room.

CARL
Yeah.

MOLLY
But that boy of yours. The last
thing he needs is room. He needs
his dad back.

I/E. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Carl knocks on the door. A cleaning lady answers.

CARL
Hi Flora. Is Percy here? Es Percy
Aqui?

FLORA
He's upstairs.

CARL
Can you tell him I'm here?

Flora goes to get him. Inez has spotted Carl at the door and
approaches.

INEZ
Is everything okay?

CARL
Yeah.

INEZ
Why are you here?

CARL
To see Percy.

INEZ
I'm glad you're here, but why
didn't you tell us you were coming?

FLORA
(appears)
He says he's sleeping.

CARL
I'll go up there.

INEZ
Wait.

CARL
He's clearly not sleeping. You
don't tell someone you're sleeping.
She would've just said he's
sleeping, not "He says he's
sleeping."

INEZ
Please. Come sit for one second.

CARL
I don't understand why--

INEZ
One second. Please, Papi.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - INEZ'S HOUSE - BRENTWOOD - DAY -
MOMENTS LATER

Carl and Inez sit in her meticulously groomed backyard
garden. Two gardeners primp at the foliage.

CARL
How do you not lose your mind with
all of these people around
constantly?

She politely waves them off for privacy.

CARL (CONT'D)

It's the one thing I don't miss
about living here.

INEZ

He was really upset about not going
to New Orleans with you.

CARL

He said he understood.

INEZ

He did understand. It still hurt
him. He misses you even when things
are normal. He wants you around
more. His grades are dropping in
school.

CARL

I'll talk to him.

INEZ

Wait.

CARL

What?

INEZ

Look at me.

CARL

(stops shifting)
What?

INEZ

I'm worried about you.

CARL

Don't be. I'm fine. I just have to
wait.

INEZ

Why wait?

CARL

I can't get a job until all this
blows over.

INEZ

Why do you still think that someone
needs to give you a job?

CARL
Because I don't have a restaurant.

INEZ
Please listen to me. I know you
don't like when I--

CARL
Is this about the food truck again?

INEZ
Just listen.

CARL
You don't plan enough parties to
keep me in business. I don't have
any money saved.

INEZ
I can--

CARL
And I can't take any money from
you. I can't. I just can't.

INEZ
I know. Listen to me. Percy and I
are going to Miami to visit my
father. Marvin has a whole--

CARL
I'm not taking charity from your ex-
husband.

INEZ
It's not charity. Will you shut up?
You're falling apart and it's
destroying the whole family.

CARL
We're not a family anymore.
Remember.

INEZ
(calm and strong)
What the fuck are you talking
about? Are you that self centered?
We may not live together and we may
not be married anymore, but we are
parents and we will always be a
family.

CARL
(hits him)
I'm sorry.

INEZ
Marvin has a whole fleet of
catering trucks. He leases them out
to caterers for construction sites.

CARL
I thought he was a developer.

INEZ
He is. He saw all the business they
were doing on his sites and saw an
opportunity.

CARL
I can't. I was one of the top new
chefs in the country. I can't drive
a roach coach for construction
sites. For your ex-husband.

INEZ
You can sell the food wherever you
want. How about this. Come with us
to Miami.

CARL
I don't know. I don't have the
money...

INEZ
None of the nannies want to travel.
Come and watch Percy. It would be a
favor for me.

CARL
Okay.

INEZ
Plus it's where it all started for
you. Your first job as a chef.
Where we met. Where Percy was born.
It might clear your mind.

CARL
And things might blow over here.

INEZ
Thank you. I think it will be good.

They sit quietly in the idyllic garden. We see that Percy was
watching the whole thing from his second story window.

He seems pleased. SCORE BUILDS with PIANO, CLAPPING and CONGAS into BANG BANG by Joe Cuba and prelaps us into the jet-wash of...

EXT. MIAMI AIRPORT - DAY

A beautifully golden backlit shot of a 777 landing with a swirl of exhaust.

EXT. MIAMI - DAY

A limo weaves its way toward SOUTH BEACH. Pastel architectural icons pass set against the azure waves. The limo eventually arrives at the..

EXT. FONTAINBLEU HOTEL - SOUTH BEACH - DAY

Inez, Percy and Carl all enter the hotel dressed for Miami.

INT. FONTAINBLEU HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

They walk through the retro lobby.

INT. FONTAINBLEU HOTEL - SUITE - DAY

They arrive in the opulent suite with soaring views of South Beach.

CARL

Nice. If you guys are set, I'll go check into my room.

INEZ

Stay here.

CARL

I need a minute to myself.

INEZ

I thought the deal was you were my nanny.

CARL

Yes.

INEZ

I have to run out for a quick meeting. Call downstairs and have them press the clothes for tonight.

(MORE)

INEZ (CONT'D)

I want you to order food for Percy
and get him a nap and a bath and
ready to go out and visit his
Abuelito when I get back.

PERCY

A nap!?! I'm nine.

INEZ

It's going to be a late night.
We're seeing Abuelito at the club.

CARL

(surprised)
Hoy Como Ayer?

INEZ

Si.

CARL

He's too young.

PERCY

Too young for what?

INEZ

He's not going to perform forever.
He wants his grandson to see him
play.

CARL

Just keep an eye on him. That place
can get pretty crazy.

INEZ

Me keep an eye? That's why you're
coming.

OFF LOOK:

EXT. LITTLE HAVANA - NIGHT

A MERCEDES drives through the streets of Little Havana. Carl,
Inez, and Percy sit in the back. They are all dressed up
Miami style. Percy looks out the window.

PERCY

Where are we going?

INEZ

This is Little Havana.

PERCY
 (concerned)
 Like in Grand Theft Auto?

INEZ
 This where I grew up.

PERCY
 You?

INEZ
 Yes. And where Abuelito lives and works.

PERCY
 Grandpa still works? What does he do?

CUT TO:

INT. HOY COMO AYER NIGHTCLUB - LITTLE HAVANA - NIGHT

The three of them sit in a packed black box nightclub no larger than a storefront restaurant. The walls are lined with black and white photos of Cuban entertainers from the past. The decor is pre-Castro Cuba.

The family sits at a tiny cocktail table on a riser and there is not one square inch free in the entire club. The tiny stage is packed with MUSICIANS, but none play. An old Cuban man in a white hat and guayabera sits at the piano. This is Percy's ABUELITO (grandfather). He breaks the silence by playing the simple line of a salsa melody. A huge cheer rises from the crowd. Percy is confused. His mom cheers and yells.

PERCY
 Grandpa plays piano?

CARL
 (excited)
 Wait. Watch.

The other band members begin to join in along with three drummers. The place erupts into a huge dance floor as everyone dances at their tables including Inez.

PERCY
 I can't see.

Carl stands him up on the chair and Carl starts to dance too. He shows Percy how to salsa.

CARL
Like this. Look.

PERCY
I'll just watch.

Then Abuelito starts to sing. His deep woody voice is still powerful and full of soul. The backup singers dance and sing in call and response. It is a carnival.

Inez and Carl are now dancing together, as a couple, and Percy seems very happy to watch them. He begins to dance how his father showed him.

EXT. CUBA OCHO RESTAURANT - LITTLE HAVANA - LATE NIGHT -
LATER

Establishing shot of a colorful restaurant in Little Havana.

INT. CUBA OCHO RESTAURANT - LITTLE HAVANA - NIGHT

Abuelito holds court as Percy sleeps with his head in his grandfather's lap. The bar is closed and the guests smoke Cuban cigars and sip aged Bacardi. The decor is a colorful melange of paintings, folk art and a repurposed bar salvaged from Sinatra's South Beach nightclub from the sixties.

A few of the musicians sit informally at tables and play an acoustic guitar and drums.

Abuelo sits, speaking in Spanish to Inez and Carl. She translates for Carl. He calls out to the HOST.

ABUELO
(Spanish)
Where's the food?

HOST
Kitchen's closed. Food is coming.

INEZ
(Spanish)
What did the tests say?

ABUELO
(Spanish)
I don't want to talk about the
tests. My music will keep me alive.
He got fat.

CARL
What's he saying?

INEZ

He said you might've put on a little weight since the last time he saw you.

CARL

Tell him I've been busy.

ABUELO

(in English)

Too busy to not eat?

(Spanish)

He's making the baby fat too.

INEZ

(Spanish)

Percy's fine. He's healthy.

ABUELO

(Spanish)

Are you two back together?

INEZ

No.

CARL

What's he saying?

INEZ

He wanted to know if we were back together.

CARL

Tell him watching him play brought back memories of when we first met.

As she translates, a sack of wrapped CUBAN SANDWICHES arrives. Carl's eyes light up as he unwraps one.

CARL (CONT'D)

Oh my God. I haven't had one of these since we moved. Nez, wake up Percy.

ABUELO

(Spanish)

Let the baby sleep.

INEZ

He says he should sleep. It's late.

CARL

But he never tasted a Cuban sandwich. He should try a real one.

ABUELO
 (English)
 You cook him one.

CARL
 I want him to have a real one. From here.

ABUELO
 (Spanish)
 His are better than these. He cooks pretty good Cuban food for a gringo.

INEZ
 He says you cook the best Cuban food he's ever tasted.

CARL
 (touched)
 Really?

ABUELO
 Sure.

Abuelo starts to sing, joining the musicians at the other table. He crosses to the jam session. Carl and Inez help hold the sleeping boy as Abuelo gets up. They are now sitting together, their son sharing their laps. Carl offers her a bite. Her hands are full.

CARL
 Delicious, right?

INEZ
 These are okay.

Carl thinks. She knows what he's thinking.

CARL
 It's worth at least hearing Marvin out. About the trucks. Is he in town?

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DAY

A cab drops Carl off at a construction yard outside of Miami. Rows of construction vehicles and cranes are lined up poised to build things.

INT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DAY

Carl enters and speaks to a RECEPTIONIST who sits before a bustling bullpen of cubicles.

CARL

I'm here to see Marvin. My name is Carl Casper.

RECEPTIONIST

The chef? He's expecting you.

INT. MARVIN'S OFFICE - MIAMI - DAY

MARVIN sits in a large office adorned with photos of construction and development projects and sports memorabilia. A golden shovel hangs on the wall. Carl walks in with reticence. Marvin bear hugs him.

MARVIN

Chef Casper!

CARL

Marv. How are you?

MARVIN

Better than you. You're a big hit on YouTube.

CARL

They say it's blowing over.

MARVIN

Really? I thought that shit lived forever online. Remember Star Wars kid? He had to leave his school.

CARL

That's what they're telling me.

MARVIN

Inez says you want to lease a lunch truck, sell food at my construction sites.

CARL

That's what she said?

MARVIN

No?

CARL
Not that I don't appreciate the
offer...

MARVIN
I get it. It's beneath you.

CARL
It's not that.

MARVIN
What is it then? You know what one
of my trucks pulls down?

CARL
I got no idea.

MARVIN
Take a guess... Three large. A
week.

CARL
That's great.

MARVIN
And most of that goes to the
operator.

CARL
No. I think that's great. It's
just... Maybe this wasn't a good
idea.

He starts to leave.

MARVIN
Hang on, Carl. Stop. Inez said you
hit rock bottom.

CARL
She said that?

MARVIN
It takes a man to admit it. I mean,
I was never there myself, but I can
see how it could happen.

CARL
Look. I fucked up. Okay. I'm all
over the internet. I'm out of
money. I got no job prospects. I'm
old. But I'm not at rock bottom.

MARVIN

Aside from being strung out or in a fucking wheelchair, how many rungs do you think you have left.

CARL

And I'm divorced.

MARVIN

Which I still can't wrap my head around for the life of me.

CARL

I mean, she's the best.

MARVIN

The best...

CARL

But when something is over...

MARVIN

In my case, yes. Not with you two.

CARL

How's that?

MARVIN

With us I thought it was love, but I think we were just really good together sexually.

CARL

Well...

MARVIN

It's gotta be weird for you on some level to know that we both slept with the same woman.

CARL

I'm okay with it, actually. Maybe because I slept with her after you two were done.

MARVIN

MMmmmm. Not so much.

CARL

You slept with her when we were married?

MARVIN

No, no. God no.

CARL
You had me for a minute.

MARVIN
I slept with her after you two
split.

CARL
What?

MARVIN
Once. I didn't even finish. We
stopped. It was a bad Idea. The
point is you were the one for her.
I can see it clear as day. If you
two don't, then whatever. And about
the truck, you can have it.

CARL
I can?

MARVIN
I know you didn't want to sell
lunch to my guys. You want a shee
shee gourmet thing. Fine. Lease to
buy. I'll give you a good deal and
you don't have to pay me until
you're in the black.

CARL
Thank you.

MARVIN
Don't thank me yet. The only truck
not spoken for needs some work.

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DAY

A busted white roach coach chugs up to Carl, howling and
whining.

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI

Carl is on the phone with Martin as he pulls apart the
truck's interior.

CARL
(phone)
No. No. None of the job prospects
panned out... No pal, sorry. Guess
you gotta stay there... Sous Chef?
That's great, Martin.
(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

Congratulations on the promotion...
Me? I'm out of the game... I don't
know, a while? The foreseeable
future... You're gonna laugh. I got
a food truck... I don't know, Cuban
sandwiches, arroz con pollo,
platanos. Simple shit like we used
to cook when the restaurant was
closed... Yeah, it's great being
back here.., Anyway, congrats on
the promotion and I'll see you when
I head back that way.

Inez pulls up in an SUV with Percy.

INEZ

It's beautiful.

CARL

It needs a lot of work.

INEZ

What doesn't?

CARL

Percy, you want to check out the
inside? I'm redoing the interior.

PERCY

Hell yeah!

INEZ

Language!

Percy jumps into the truck like a play structure. Carl pulls
her aside.

INEZ (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

CARL

Did you sleep with him?

INEZ

Who?

CARL

Marvin.

INEZ

Of course I did. He was my husband.

CARL

After we were married.

INEZ
Oh, that?

CARL
Yes. "That."

INEZ
First of all. It is none of your business what I do after we are divorced. I don't ask you about your cute little hostess with the mostess.

CARL
Fair enough.

INEZ
Second, I was lonely and sad and we had a few drinks...

CARL
(cringes)
Okay. That's enough.

INEZ
But we couldn't go through with it. We both knew we were just friends and always would be.

CARL
Like us?

Pregnant pause is interrupted by Percy popping out the roof vent.

PERCY
Can I help?

INEZ
That is a great idea. Mommy has plans. You can stay and help daddy.

She gets into the SUV.

CARL
But it's dangerous. There are tools..

INEZ
Don't worry. He's half Latin.

She pulls away. They look at each other.

CARL
What the hell. Let's get to work.

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DAY - LATER

Carl is under the hood, changing belts.

Percy flushes out the interior with a hose.

Father and son remove the burners.

CARL
See, now this isn't even really a stove. It only puts out enough heat to keep soup warm. We need a proper griddle and burner set up.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN SUPPLY - MIAMI - DAY

Father and son walk down the aisles of majestic stainless steel.

CARL
Now this here is what I'm talking about. Six spider burners and a four burner griddle with a grease trap. Double convection ovens.

PERCY
Will it fit?

CARL
We'll make it fit.

Carl holds up a Sawzall.

CUT TO another aisle.

CARL (CONT'D)
And this is the piece de resistance.

PERCY
A George Foreman grill?

CARL
Bite your tongue. This what you call a plancha. It is the key to my entire livelihood from this day forward.

CUT TO check out. Carl swipes his credit card.

CARL (CONT'D)
I just spent all your Quinceañera money.

PERCY
Girls have Quinceañeras, not boys.

CARL
Then we better sell a lot of sandwiches.

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DAY

A pallet with the new stove sits on the tarmac next to the dilapidated food truck. It looks huge and heavy.

PERCY
How are we going to get it in?

CARL
Marvin said I could use some of his laborers if I needed them.

He calls out to some Latino LABORERS who are lounging around on some parked equipment.

CARL (CONT'D)
Hey guys. Can you give me a hand for a second.
(he's ignored)
Marvin said you would help me?
(nothing)
I guess we'll have to lift it ourselves somehow.

They push it. It's huge. He goes over to a rolling jack.

CARL (CONT'D)
(to workers)
Mind if I use this?

They ignore him. He slides it under the palette, but it only goes up a few inches.

CARL (CONT'D)
Shit.

He is interrupted by a familiar voice off screen.

MARTIN
(o.c.)
Need some help, Jefe?

PERCY
(runs over)
Martin!

CARL
What the hell are you doing here?

MARTIN
I told you if you got another gig,
I'd drop everything to work the
line for you.

CARL
But it's a food truck. And you're a
Sous Chef now.

MARTIN
So? Food trucks don't need a Sous
Chef.

CARL
Fine. You're hired. It pays
nothing.

MARTIN
I'll take it.

CARL
And I can't get the stove in the
damn truck.

Martin whistles loudly and chirps some spirited pleasantries to the Latino workers who all hustle over to help.

TIME CUT as it is slid into place.

MARTIN
I'll get the propane tanks filled.
When you go to the market fetch us
a case of cerveza.

CARL
Why am I going to the market?

MARTIN
Because by the time you get back,
we'll have the interior buttoned up
and ready for you to get to work on
the menu. I promised these guys the
best meal of their life.

EXT. FOOD MARKET - LITTLE HAVANA - DAY

Carl and Percy select meats and produce.

CARL

See this? You know what this is?

PERCY

Bananas?

CARL

Platanos. Here, smell. Different, right? This one is a maduro. We don't want that kind. We want green. Like this. All green. For frying...

Then the baked goods...

CARL (CONT'D)

I'm going to bake these myself when I have time. I need this bread for Cubanos and this bread for Medianoches.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - MARVIN'S YARD - DAY

Cuban music plays as Carl and Martin work side by side assembling the sandwiches. Martin pulls the roast pork out of the oven. Percy watches, perched on the counter.

PERCY

We could've just bought that at the store. They sold it there.

MARTIN

(what?)

Are you sure this is your kid, Jefe.

CARL

That's slow roasted in Martin's special mojo.

MARTIN

With casava. Here, smell.

CARL

He don't want to learn about casava.

PERCY

I do!

CUTS OF them cooking like a four handed machine. Tight shots of the culinary ballet. The food comes alive to the music.

MARTIN
Is the placha hot?

PERCY
Me?

MARTIN
Yeah, you.

PERCY
Do I touch it?

MARTIN
What the hell do you think?

PERCY
No.

MARTIN
Right, no.

PERCY
Then..?

CARL
Flick water on it.

It sizzles.

CARL (CONT'D)
It's ready. Watch. Brush the butter on like this. Press it down. See? When the cheese looks like that and the bread gets that gold edge it's done. A line cook is like a robot. You gotta do it exactly like I show you. Every time.

He whacks it into three bites.

CARL (CONT'D)
Taste.

All three eat.

MARTIN
Woooo Hoooo! I am home!

CARL
Good?

PERCY
Delicious.

CARL
Okay. Then we're open.

PERCY
Open?

They throw open the awning and call out to the workers sipping the beer they got for helping with the stove. It is now...

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

CARL
Cubanos are ready.

CUTS OF the assembly line chugging along. Percy sweats it out as he works the plancha. The workers call out in enthusiasm. They approve of the meal.

MARTIN
We need a better sound system. I know a guy out here.

CARL
My cards are maxed out and we aren't charging for food yet.

MARTIN
But you look happy as hell.

CARL
So happy.

The sandwiches fly out the window and the line grows. Other workers gather. No one is turned away.

Carl rejects a sandwich. Into the bin.

CARL (CONT'D)
Bread's overdone.

PERCY
So? It's free.

Martin and Carl share a dour look. Carl beckons Percy to follow him out the back of the truck. A quiet moment.

CARL
Is this boring to you?

PERCY

No. I like it.

CARL

Well, I love it. Everything good that has come to me in my life came from this. Do you understand?

PERCY

Yes.

CARL

This is my livelihood. I met your mother because of this. You would never have been born. Do you understand?

PERCY

Yes.

CARL

God gives you many gifts. Passion. Beauty. Love. These are special things. Why not share these things with others? I mean when you can.

PERCY

Yes.

CARL

Now, should we have served that sandwich?

PERCY

No.

He gives his son a big kiss.

CARL

Now get back in there. These people are hungry.

EXT. MARVIN'S YARDS - MIAMI - NIGHT

Christmas lights hang from the awning. The three cooks sit in folding chairs basking in the afterglow of a good service. They sip beers. Martin smokes a cigar. He hands Percy a beer.

PERCY

Is that a beer.

MARTIN

No. It's cerveza.

PERCY

I'm nine. I can't drink beer.

MARTIN

You're kitchen staff.

PERCY

Dad?

CARL

Just a sip. I figure we shake it out in South Beach a couple of days then head back to LA.

MARTIN

Hit a few cities on the way back?

CARL

May as well.

MARTIN

Will she make the trip.

CARL

She's pretty clean under the hood. All I needed to do was change the belts, filters and fluids.

PERCY

Can I come?

CARL

Come where?

PERCY

On the trip.

CARL

We're just driving home. You get to go home first class on a plane with mommy and all her divorce money.

PERCY

I want to go with you. You said you were stopping in cities.

CARL

You have school.

PERCY

I'm on break.

CARL

I don't know...

PERCY

Martin?

MARTIN

I was nine when I started working a kitchen.

PERCY

Please.

CARL

I'll ask your mom.

PERCY

I already did. She says yes.

He smiles and holds up a text.

MARTIN

I'll drop you guys off at the hotel. You stock up on ingredients in the morning. I'll get a fresh coat of paint on this thing.

CARL

We can paint it when we get back.

MARTIN

It's on me. I know a guy.

EXT. FONTAINBLEU HOTEL - SOUTH BEACH - DAY

The valet stand is hopping with guests and cars. Hip lounge electronica bleeds out from the hip lobby. Carl is in his cooking whites. Percy is dressed like a miniature line cook. They have their bags piled up for the cross-country journey. Inez stands before them, admiring her two men.

INEZ

Now, you have all my numbers.

CARL

Yes.

INEZ

And this truck has seat belts.

CARL

It does.

INEZ

And you have your cell phone and your kidnapping tracker.

PERCY

Yes, mom.

INEZ

And if you change your mind you can
always...

Their conversation is slowly drowned out by an annoyingly loud passing CAR STEREO. It gets louder and louder until everyone looks over from the valet area.

PERCY

Holy shit...

CLOSE CUTS over details of the customized FOOD TRUCK:

Throbbing exterior SPEAKERS,

CHROMED RIMS and CURB FEELERS,

A Cuban/graffiti/tattoo inspired paint job that occupies every square inch of the vehicle's exterior.

Above the windscreen, engraved in Olde English tattoo lettering "EL JEFE" with two crossed pirate blades, except one is a chef's knife and ones a two-tonged meat fork.

Martin pulls up to the curb. Percy lights up.

MARTIN

Get in. The Beach is packed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH BEACH - OCEAN DRIVE - DAY

The truck cruises past the Scarface "Chainsaw Hotel" (728 Ocean) as everyone watches them pass and hears the Cuban rhythms ringing out from the PA.

They land at a open stretch of the crowded strip. They pop open and Carl scratches out a short and simple menu on a chalkboard:

CUBANOS, MIDNIGHT SANDWICHES, MENUUDO, ARROZ CON POLLO, FRIED PLANTAINS.

Boom. That's it. Simple. He hangs the sign. A crowd forms immediately. The music blasts and the three guys dance as they work. Martin jumps on the PA mic.

MARTIN

(PA)

Mira mira mira. The best Cuban food
on South Beach. Cubanos,
Medianoches, platanos, arroz con
pollo, menudo!

Some are there to try the food, some to video the tourist
spectacle of this painted monstrosity.

People like the food. Everyone is at least curious. Of
course, the COPS come.

COP

You can't park here. You got a
license?

CARL

(shows permit)

Try one.

COP

What?

CARL

Try a sandwich.

COP

You're going to have to move on.
This street isn't zoned for
vendors.

People start booing the cops. Percy jumps out and videos with
his phone. Martin gets on the PA.

MARTIN

Take it easy. He's just doing his
job, people. El Jefe has to move on
down the road...

COP

Hey, you're the chef from the
video.

CARL

Yes.

COP

You were on Tosh.0.

CARL

Great.

COP

Can you take a picture with me for
my kid?

CARL

If you stand up here next to me.

The cop climbs into the truck and stands in the window with him. The crowd cheers as they pose together. Everyone is dancing to the music. Percy videos and takes pictures, as does the entire crowd.

JUMP TO them pulling away with people following and waving like kids behind an ice cream truck.

PERCY

That was amazing.

CARL

I think they like the food.

EXT. I95 NORTH - ORLANDO - DAY

Carl drives. Percy pecks away at his cell phone. Posting Instagram pix and videos.

CARL

You sending pics to mom?

PERCY

Among other things. You mind if I
create an Instagram account for
you?

CARL

What is it?

PERCY

A place to share pictures online.

CARL

"Share" sounds like such a nice
word. I remember when everyone was
"sharing" my video.

PERCY

The internet's not bad, dad. It
just makes good things better and
bad things worse.

CARL

Enough with the virtual world let's do something real. Want to stop at Disneyworld?

PERCY

Disneyworld? That's real? We shouldn't stop til we hit New Orleans. I can't wait to try a Beignet.

MARTIN

(stirring from nap)
Now that's your son, Jefe.

They proudly drive past the Disneyworld exit.

EXT. 10 WEST - NIGHT

Martin drives as the other two sleep.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - FRENCHMAN STREET - FRENCH QUARTER - DAY

The food truck pulls into the French Quarter and park. Music bleeds out from the bars. The music shares a common lineage with the Afro-Cuban sound of Little Havana.

Martin starts the burners. Carl and Percy hop out the back.

PERCY

Where are we?

CARL

The French Quarter.

PERCY

Bourbon Street?

CARL

Frenchman. Bourbon's for tourists.

Percy takes a digital picture. He types on his phone.

They walk into a bakery and eat Beignets.

CARL (CONT'D)

Eat it slow. You'll never have your first beignet ever again.

PERCY

(eats)
Pretty cool.

CARL
Not bad, right? It doesn't taste
like that anywhere else.

PERCY
I thought the whole city was under
water.

CARL
It was. But now it's back. Pretty
cool, huh?

PERCY
Pretty cool.

They walk back and there's a huge crowd gathered around,
waiting for the truck to open.

CARL
What the hell?

He loads up in the back and the crowd CHEERS for him. Carl
waves. People take pictures. They duck inside.

MARTIN
What the hell's going on out there?
They ain't never seen a food truck?

PERCY
I tweeted it.

CARL
What?

PERCY
I tweeted a picture on your account
and geotagged it.

CARL
What the hell are you talking
about.

PERCY
Look...

He holds up his phone. An Instagram pic of the truck in the
French Quarter. "Now you see us now you don't. El Jefe
cruising Frenchman Street #NOLA #ElJefe"

PERCY (CONT'D)
I tagged it so they could mark us
on their maps.

MARTIN

Smart kid.

Carl writes the menu on the chalkboard. Martin throws open the window. The crowd clamors for sandwiches, Fists full of cash.

MONTAGE of the three men cooking in tandem. The crowd is slamming them. Percy is having problems keeping up.

PERCY

I can't keep up.

CARL

It's called being in the weeds.

PERCY

What do I do?

CARL

Turn and burn.

MARTIN

Turn and burn, baby!

They share a smile of comraderie. The kid is picking up moves.

The crowd slowly peels away from the truck. Something down the street is distracting them. They head towards it.

PERCY

What happened?

They all step out. They see a parade heading their way. Martin looks out as the crowd comes toward them.

MARTIN

It's a funeral.

PERCY

With a dead person?

MARTIN

They cut the body loose. That's the Second Line.

They all watch as the Second Line passes. The impromptu marching band plays a Dixieland version on I'LL FLY AWAY. SIDEWALK STEPPERS dance behind the band.

PERCY

Why are they so happy?

CARL
 Just because your sad doesn't mean
 you can't be happy.

Percy watches intensely. His dad hoists him onto his
 shoulders. They sway to the music.

The music carries us over the...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY 10 WEST - DAY

El Jefe chugs down the highway.

INT. MC MANSION - BRENTWOOD - DAY

Inez picks up her phone in her house.

INEZ
 (phone)
 Mijo?

PERCY
 (on phone)
 Hi mom.

INEZ
 Where are you?

CROSS CUT WITH:

EXT. AUSTIN TEXAS - DAY

The truck is parked near Sixth Street and the crowd is even
 bigger than New Orleans. A STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN cover rattles
 out from a blues club.

PERCY
 (phone)
 We're in Austin.

INEZ
 (phone)
 Are you okay?

PERCY
 I'm great!

INEZ
 How's daddy?

PERCY
Here. Talk to him.

He slides the phone into Carl's nape as he smiles for a camera flash and serves a Medianoche.

CARL
Hi, Nez.

INEZ
Do you want me to come pick him up?

CARL
You're a thousand miles away.

INEZ
I'll fly out there.

CARL
He's fine. A couple of burns and two stitches from a paring knife.

INEZ
Send him home. I'm serious.

CARL
He's a cook now.

PERCY
(yelling at phone)
I'm a line cook!

INEZ
Please be careful.

CARL
I'll have him home in time for school.

INEZ
Are you okay?

CARL
I'm amazing.

INEZ
You look like you're having fun.

She clicks through Yelp and Pinterest pages of the food truck posted by fans. The user ratings are very high. It clearly has a growing following.

CARL
Did you know your son could work a
grill?

PERCY
(yelling at phone)
I had beer!

INEZ
What did he say?

CARL
He said he can't wait to see you.

INEZ
Tell him I love him.

CARL
He says I love you.

INEZ
What?

CARL
I love you!

INEZ
I love you too.
(then)
Tell him that.

CARL
Bye.

Martin and Percy both are surprised but pleased by what appeared to be an ambiguous show of affection. The crowd calls out for more.

EXT. AUSTIN TEXAS - NIGHT - LATER

Carl scrawls "SOLD OUT" over the menu on the chalkboard. Martin slams closed the gate.

Carl and Martin sip beers on the truck and watch a street corner BLUES BAND Percy clicks strings of letters into his phone, documenting everything.

The electric blues guitar cries through its pignose into the night as we...

FADE TO:

EXT. ABBOT KINNEY - VENICE, CALIFORNIA - DAY

FADE UP on SHOTS of VENICE and LA.

El Jefe is parked in a lot on Abbot Kinney Boulevard. Martin works the stoves inside. Carl pulls fresh baked bread out of the oven.

He then sits at a small round table with two folding chairs. Jen, the publicist, is waiting there for him overdressed for the informal setting. Carl scribbles the menu on a chalkboard. Soothing Cuban folk music quietly croons from the PA.

JEN

I love this.

CARL

(preoccupied with menu)
What?

JEN

This whole thing. I love it.

CARL

The truck?

JEN

The truck. The music. The branding.
It looks like you're not trying.

CARL

We're not trying.

JEN

Exactly. So, I was able to talk to some of my connections in New Media and I can secure some primo placement in the digital space. I think the time is finally ripe to bring you on as a client.

CARL

A client?

JEN

I'm confident I can make the whole viral video a non-factor. I got a firm offer from the Hell's Kitchen people which might be worth looking at.

CARL

I'm not interested.

JEN

Neither am I. I think I can get you your own reality show on Bravo.

CARL

I really don't--

JEN

Or the Food Network. I get it. I have no problem trading ratings for credibility.

CARL

Jen. I'm not signing up for your services.

JEN

As a friend, can I tell you? You need someone with their finger on the pulse of the online culture.

CARL

I do. My nine year old son.

JEN

He's a great kid--

CARL

And he built me up to seven hundred thousand followers on twitter, compiled a direct marketing email list indexed by market, and has me represented in every social media community.

JEN

I think you're making a huge mistake.

CARL

Betting on my family? I've done worse. Want a sandwich?

JEN

Do you have anything gluten free?

EXT. ABBOT KINNEY - VENICE - NIGHT

The Boulevard is packed. It is FIRST FRIDAYS, when the vendors and food trucks rule the night. The entire area is packed with people and closed to traffic. Percy works the griddle. Carl presses cubanos and Martin serves.

The truck's music makes the whole crowd bounce, and the line stretches down the street. Inez even helps by taking orders.

INEZ

Two cubanos, one medianoche, three platanos.

PERCY

Two cubanos, one midnight, three plantains!

INEZ

Next.

She looks down and sees it is Ramsey Michel, the critic whose review and accompanying outburst video went viral and ruined Carl's life.

INEZ (CONT'D)

No food for you.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I'd like to speak to the chef.

INEZ

The hell you will.

CARL

(relieves her. steps down)
I got this. What did you come here for?

RAMSEY MICHEL

To taste your food.

CARL

I thought I didn't have the heart to cook.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I didn't expect you to serve me. I sent someone to buy it for me.

CARL

And?

RAMSEY MICHEL

It's amazing. But I will not write about it.

CARL

Can I share something with you?
What happened between us, it really did a number on me.

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

It robbed me of my pride, my career, my dignity. Part of me died. I know people who do what you do don't care about such things...

RAMSEY MICHEL

That's not true.

CARL

Please. Let me finish. What you do, it hurts people. People who are trying. How can you live with yourself?

RAMSEY MICHEL

May I?

CARL

Please.

RAMSEY MICHEL

You made one mistake. You picked a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel. I wouldn't challenge you to a cook off. Why in hell would you start a flame war with me?

CARL

I thought I was private messaging you.

RAMSEY MICHEL

Regardless. The reason I wrote what I did was I loved your menu. But you stopped growing. You seemed lazy. Or scared.

CARL

They wouldn't let me do anything.

RAMSEY MICHEL

All I know is what you serve me. And what you're serving here...

(gestures)

This has heart. I taste your passion. I am not going to write about it. I'm not going to write about it because I am going to back you.

CARL

I don't understand.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I want to bankroll you. If you'll have me.

CARL

I don't know.

RAMSEY MICHEL

I have a lot of resources from selling my site last year. I can't write about something I have a vested interest in. Despite what you might think, journalists have a code they stick by and I like to think our passions run as deep as chefs'.

CARL

I don't know. I'm happy how it is.

RAMSEY MICHEL

As well you should be. And who would blame you if you had a few trust issues? But I have a bid in on a property on Rose that's zoned and permitted and I would let you build it out and run it as you see fit. You could cook whatever you want. Take your time. Consider it. I would put everything in writing. And the two of us burying the hatchet would be a story in itself. Reservations out the door. If not, I'll still eat your food whenever you tweet. It's pretty fucking good.

He pulls out a wrapped sandwich and goes. Carl is dumbstruck. Martin steps down.

MARTIN

What the hell did that asshole want?

CARL

I think I found my new partner.

FADE TO:

I/E. ROSE AVENUE - VENICE - NIGHT

A HORN RUSH blares into the night air as we see the newly opened restaurant "EL JEFE."

It's built into an old house on the residential block of Rose Avenue in Venice. White Christmas lights sparkle along the gables. A sign reads "Closed For Private Event."

We enter and push past a bustling interior, rustic Cuban decor, and CAMERA weaves through wedding decorations and cake. Countless platters of Cuban cuisine.

We TRACK out into the backyard to see a churning dance floor as Percy's grandfather, Abuelito sings before a giant salsa band. We see Inez in a wedding dress and Carl is her groom once again. A banner congratulates Carl and Inez on their nuptials. Tony, Molly, and the staff of Gauloises are all guests. So is Ramsey Michel.

Martin, in a suit, fights his way to the microphone. Abuelo signals the band to play quiet so Martin can make his toast.

MARTIN

To second chances!

Everyone cheers. Especially Percy. He dances with his parents as the band kicks into overdrive.

We PULL BACK to a rooftop shot of the glowing backyard in a sparkling city.

FADE TO BLACK.